

THE CURIOUS
INCIDENT OF
THE DOG IN THE
NIGHT-TIME - By
Mark Haddon

STYLE

MARK HADDON uses a SIMPLE writing style to communicate the thoughts of the narrator CHRISTOPHER BOONE.

- Christopher writes in simple sentences. They are short and often start with *connective* such as 'BUT' or 'AND'.
- It *seems* as if Christopher is simple - but we will learn that this writing style is a RED HERRING - we are meant to think that Christopher is simple at the start of the novel.
- Later on we will learn that he is as complicated as you or me.
- connectives
- simple sentences
- diagrams
- first person stream of consciousness -

these are all STYLISTIC FEATURES of the novel.

- SELF - REFLEXIVE - 'this is a murder mystery novel'
- footnotes - little numbers at the bottom of the page that help to explain ideas - not normally in fiction - a non-fiction technique.
- Repetition - Christopher says 'he said' and 'i said' a lot - shows that he is 'simple' and that he does not understand emotion - it is a factual report
- Long listing - feature of stream of consciousness (we don't need a breath in our thoughts)

THEMES

Don't judge a book by its cover
Know them before you judge them
First impressions are not always the right impressions
Life is like a puzzle - but it is up to us to solve it
It is important to be independent
The importance of order and stability

Dealing with absence
Everybody is different
Life is like prime numbers - why?
Life is like maths - there are several ways to solve a problem - everyone is different.
Face your fears

CHARACTER

Christopher John Francis Boone - a teenage boy who has Aspergers Syndrome

He is very intelligent and analytical

He does not like touching/no hugs - it is an important change when he lets his father bathe him

He is an observer - notices the smallest details about life.

He is very accurate: "15 yrs 3 months and 3 days old" at the start of the book

He cannot read people - he likes dogs because they are easy to read and 'they do not tell lies'

Does not like liars - is important because he finds out his Dad lied to him about his mother and how he killed Wellington.

Cannot read or judge people easily - needs to carry a piece of paper around with him that explains emotions as happy face symbols.

He reacts strangely to people - *in Chapter 5 he rolls into a ball and blocks out the world around him. "It was nice". This shows that it is important for him to block out the world around him - and how we all have different ways of dealing with emotions.*

He often gets information overload - his mind is like a computer that turns off when it gets too much information

Is inflexible

He sees the world differently - *in chapter 13 he describes his mind like a slicing machine in a bakery - shows that his mind operates at a different rate to others.*

He does not tell lies - "This is why everything I have written here is true" - this is interesting because the novel is fiction. It is therefore IRONIC that he is talking about how he does not like things that are made up.

Important events

Christopher finds Wellington

Christopher is arrested

Christopher does detective work - even though Father has asked him not to

Christopher talks to strangers

Christopher talks to Mrs Alexander and finds out his mother was doing sex with Mr Shears.

Father gets angry at

Christopher for getting into other people's business.

Christopher promises to stop

Father throws Christopher's book away

Father hits Christopher

Christopher finds the letters

Father has lied. Mother is alive. Christopher is given a bath.

Father admits he killed Wellington

Christopher does not trust father

Christopher has two mysteries to solve

Christopher uses a spiral pattern to find the train station

The train station the train is crowded

Toby gets lost

Christopher is nearly run over

C.B hides in the luggage compartment

C.B finds mother in London

C.B tells mother he was told she was dead

Mother starts screaming

Mr Shears threatens

Christopher Christopher gets Sandy

Christopher feels frustrated about

the test.

Christopher manages to calm himself down and take the

test

Christopher can do anything



IMPORTANT EVENTS

These are events which communicate a theme to us.

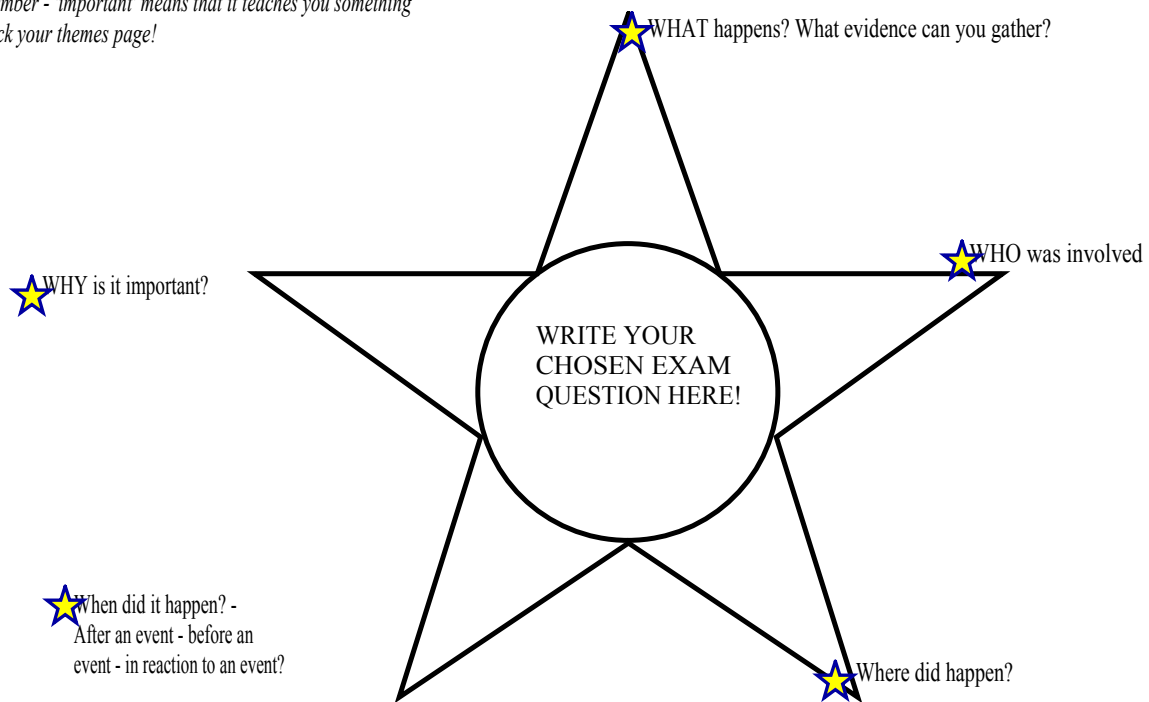
That means that we LEARN something from an event, conflict or situation.

It may be when a character faces a fear, deals with a relationship or confronts someone. If it is important we must be able to explain WHY (which theme is communicated).

JIGSAW ACTIVITY/STAR CHART

In your group - choose an important change or an important event to write a literature response on.

Remember - 'important' means that it teaches you something - check your themes page!



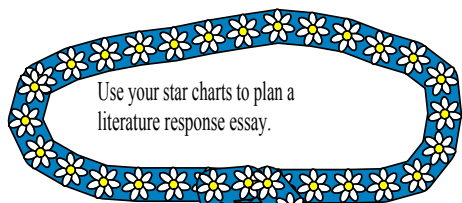
WHAT IS IMPORTANT? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

An important conflict is between Christopher's ordered universe and the real world outside.

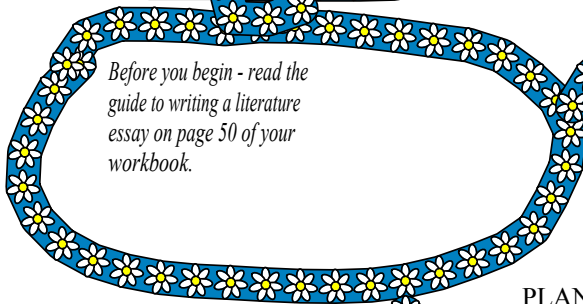
An important decision is when Christopher decides to disobey his father and continue in the hunt for Wellington's killer.

An important scene is the train station in Swindon because it represents the chaos that Christopher comes up against in search for his mother.

An important relationship is between father and Christopher because Father lies to Christopher in order to protect him from the truth. He loves him and is afraid that he will not cope with the way that his mother has abandoned the family. Christopher has a unique perception of the world that is defined by what people should and should not do. His understanding of life and love is limited. His father wants to protect Christopher from the betrayal that he feels by telling him that Mother is dead. Death can be a 'numbers game' but betrayal cannot. This shows that Father loves Christopher very much – to the point that he puts his own relationship of trust with Christopher on the line.



Use your star charts to plan a literature response essay.



Before you begin - read the guide to writing a literature essay on page 50 of your workbook.

Remember the SEE SONG!!

PLAN YOUR ANSWER WITH YOUR GROUP
ON PAGE 61.

FIND EXAMPLES OF THE FOLLOWING: - see what you know about style...

Swearing - "What in f***s name have you done to my dog?"

- shows that Christopher, the narrator of the novel, cannot edit. He quotes things and he sees things as they are.

First person - "I am fifteen years and three months and two days."

- more personal, it is like a diary - and it allows us to understand Christopher's point of view better.

Strange order - Prime numbers are used to order the chapters instead of consecutive chapter numbers.

- shows Christopher's logic - he likes prime numbers and he is writing a book about his life
- and life is like prime numbers.

Disorder - Each chapter alternates between the mystery of Wellington's murder and Christopher's own life and perspectives.

- shows how his own way of thinking and take on life is a different perspective to what we would expect. Each personal chapter offers us additional insights into Christopher's world which helps us to understand how he is solving the mystery.

A departure from the expected - "I feel sick. My mother had not had a heart attack. Mother had not died. Mother had been alive all the time and Father had lied to me about this." p141
"I killed Wellington, Christopher." p150

- things are not always as they seem - we cannot always trust the ones we love. Sometimes people lie to us in order to protect us. This is when Christopher begins to grow up. These moments could be called 'turning points' because they trigger a change in the main character.

Diagrams - happy/sad faces, the cars on the card, diagram of the houses - the street plan, the star diagram to explain the universe, the map of the zoo, graphs of number of frog, the train station plan, puzzle solution, how to find out prime numbers grid.

- to quickly explain what he means, to give us an image so that the narrator can be sure that we understand, shows that Christopher understands that everyone is different.

Use of reported speech -

For each example find a quote - and try to write down
included in the novel.

why you think this has been

IMPORTANT EVENTS - these are moments or scenes in the text that reveal something interesting about a character or relationship or communicate a theme (teach us something).

Christopher finds Wellington - this is important because it begins the novel with a mystery that the main character has to solve. We find out that he is a bit unusual because he describes the scene in a very matter of fact way. We find out that Christopher cannot deal with his emotions and reacts strangely to being yelled at. This is an important event because it reveals Christopher to be a logical boy who is a little strange.

Christopher does detective work - even though Father has asked him not to

- this is important because ...

Go back to your IMPORTANT EVENTS page - can you figure out what you learn from each event?
Give details? Make sure you explain what you mean -
remember - your marker may not know Christopher at all.

SKIM READING - scan and skim the novel - pages 1 - 55.

1. What colours does Christopher have negative associations with? Why?

- brown,

black and yellow. We do not know why yet - but he does not eat brown food - he associates black cars with having a bad day and he does not eat anything yellow (he refuses to eat Mrs Alexander's cake). These colours are properly explained on p105.

2. Find an example in the text of when Christopher does not behave like we would expect him to.

At the start of the novel he curls up on the ground and moans. He does this to block out all the sounds and sights around him - to make himself feel safe.

3. Who is Christopher's PRIME SUSPECT? Why?

Mr. Shears. Because he has left Mrs Shears two years ago and Christopher deduces that he is the only person close enough to Mrs Shears to get her gardening gear and to want to hurt her by murdering her dog.

4. How long ago did mother die?

Two years ago.

5. What is interesting about Mrs Alexander?

She is old, slightly deaf, wears jeans and has sneakers on with red laces. She has a grandson the same age as Christopher.

6. Why is life like a puzzle?

It is difficult to work out - but you have to work it out for yourself. Sometimes life is not logical.

7. What is the significance of prime numbers in the novel?

Christopher likes prime numbers because they are divisible only by themselves and one. He has used them as a way of numbering his chapters and to show that everyone does things differently. Life is like prime numbers because it is up to you (one) to solve the problems that life presents. It is impossible to work out the rules.

8. What is Christopher's mind like?

A bread slicing machine. It processes things at a different rate to other people and when it is overloaded it 'jams'. This is why he has to stop anything else getting in and curl up or moan.

9. This will not be a funny book (fill in the gaps).

Why is this unusual?

Because Christopher is 'funny' or odd. He sometimes describes things that are funny but cannot always see the humour in what he is describing (he does not understand puns). He sees puns as 'lies' and he does not like liars or anything that is not straightforwardly true.

10. Why does Christopher not 'do chatting'?

It seems meaningless to him. It is not connected and seems to be a series of unconnected comments. It relies on responding to other people's ideas and he finds reading people hard.

QUOTE BANK:

"I was so excited. When I started writing my book there was only one mystery to solve. Now there were two."

"I put my hands over my ears and closed my eyes and I rolled forward till I was hunched up with my forehead pressed onto the grass. The grass was wet and cold. It was nice."

"Prime numbers are like life - you can never work out all the rules even if you spend all your time thinking about them."

"This will not be a funny book."

"Novels are supposed to have descriptions in them."

"This is a murder mystery novel."

"I like dogs. You always know what a dog is thinking."

"Siobhan said that I should write something that I would want to read myself."